

Substitute Specification

Divisional of Application No. 09/946,486

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

ALIGNMENT METHOD AND EXPOSURE APPARATUS

USING THE METHOD

This application is a divisional application of copending U.S. patent application number 09/946,486, filed September 6, 2001.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to an alignment method and an exposure apparatus using the method, and particularly is suitable for an alignment method in semiconductor manufacturing and method and apparatuses for manufacturing devices using it.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Currently, in semiconductor manufacturing, a semiconductor device is fabricated by depositing multiple layers successively. In actual semiconductor manufacturing, a method is known wherein instead of measuring positions of alignment marks formed in a layer prior to exposure, marks are formed in the multiple layers and alignment is performed by measuring positions of the marks in multiple layers.

As described in Japanese Patent Laid-Open No. 7-321012, it is suggested that when forming a layer on a substrate, the layer is formed after measuring positions of marks formed in each of at least two layers formed prior to the layer, based on measurement of the mark positions in each of said layers.

In the past, there has been a problem that, in measuring alignment marks formed in each layer, the measurement accuracy is degraded due to manufacturing processes such as the physical feature and resist application condition of each alignment mark.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide an alignment method and an exposure apparatus using the method wherein high accuracy alignment is provided by switching measurement conditions or measurement parts for the alignment in measuring alignment marks formed in each layer.

In order to achieve the object above-described, an alignment method of the present invention is a method wherein when forming a new layer on a substrate, alignment is performed by measuring each position of existing layers formed prior to the above-described new layer and the above-described new layer in a first measurement condition or a second measurement condition, comprising the steps of: measuring by switching between the above-described first and second measurement conditions for marks formed in each of the above-described existing layers; and performing alignment between the above-described existing layers and the above-described new layer based on measurement of mark positions of the above-described existing layers.

Preferably, the above-described second measurement condition has a plurality of different conditions in an optical characteristic, and the measurement is performing by switching the measurement conditions. As the optical characteristic, preferably wavelength of illumination light for the measurement is switched. As the above-described optical characteristic values representing light intensity distribution of illumination light for the measurement (σ = standard deviation) may be switched.

The present invention includes an exposure apparatus for using any of the above-described alignment method and forming the above-described new layer.

The exposure apparatus according to the present invention is an apparatus wherein an exposed object is aligned based on measurement of position information on marks formed in each of existing layers on the exposed object on which the existing layers are provided and a new layer is to be formed, and then projection exposure is performed, the apparatus having a first measurement part and a second measurement part for measuring the position information on the marks, the above-described first and second measurement parts being configured such that they can be switched for the marks formed in each of the above-described existing layers.

It is preferred that the above-described first and second measurement parts are switched manually, or that switching of the above-described first and second measurement parts are performed based on automatic calculation of contrast that is made before exposure.

An exposure method of the present invention is a method for aligning an exposed object having a plurality of existing layers with alignment marks formed in each of them based on measurement of the alignment marks, and projection-exposing the object, wherein when measuring the alignment marks in the above-described each layer, each alignment mark

is measured by switching conditions of illumination light for the measurement depending on the particular alignment mark in each layer.

The present invention can also be applied to a semiconductor device manufacturing method comprising the steps of: installing in a semiconductor manufacturing factory a plurality of manufacturing apparatuses for performing various processes including the above-described exposure apparatus; and manufacturing semiconductor devices by performing a plurality of processes with the manufacturing apparatuses. The semiconductor device manufacturing method may be also characterized in that it further comprises the steps of: connecting the above-described manufacturing apparatuses by a local area network; and data-communicating information about at least the above-described manufacturing apparatuses of the above-described manufacturing apparatuses between the above-described local area network and an external network outside the above-described semiconductor manufacturing factory, characterized in that maintenance information for the above-described exposure apparatus is obtained by accessing and communicating data with a database provided by a vendor or user of the above-described exposure apparatus via the above-described external network, or production control is conducted by communicating data via the above-described external network between the above-described semiconductor manufacturing factory and a semiconductor manufacturing factory other than the above-described semiconductor manufacturing factory.

The present invention may be applied to a semiconductor manufacturing factory comprising: a group of manufacturing apparatuses for performing various processes including the above-described exposure apparatuses; a local area network for connecting the

manufacturing apparatuses; and a gateway allowing access by the local area network to an external network outside of the factory, wherein data communication of information about at least one apparatus of the above-described manufacturing apparatuses is provided, and the present invention can be applied to a maintenance method for an exposure apparatus installed in a semiconductor manufacturing factory, comprising the steps of: a user or vendor of the above-described exposure apparatus providing a maintenance database connected to an external network for the semiconductor manufacturing factory; allowing access from inside of the above-described semiconductor manufacturing factory via the above-described external network to the above-described maintenance database; and transmitting maintenance information stored in the above-described maintenance database via the above-described external network to the semiconductor manufacturing factory side.

The present invention may also be characterized in that the above-described exposure apparatus further comprises a display, a network interface, and a computer for executing software for the network, wherein data-communication of maintenance information on the exposure apparatus via a computer network is provided, and preferably, the software for the network provides on the above-described display a user interface connected to an external network for a factory with the above-described exposure apparatus installed therein, for accessing a maintenance database provided by a vendor or user of the above-described exposure apparatus, whereby allowing acquisition of information from the database via the above-described external network.

Other features and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which like reference characters designate the same or similar parts throughout the figures thereof.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of the specification, illustrate embodiments of the invention and, together with the description, serve to explain the principles of the invention.

FIG. 1 is a block diagram showing an exposure apparatus comprising an alignment device including a non-exposure TTL mechanism and an Off-Axis mechanism according to an embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 2A is a plan view of an in-shot arrangement for alignment marks according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2B shows a step formation for the alignment marks;

FIG. 3 shows measurement shots in global alignment according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 4 shows a measurement/exposure sequence according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 5 is a flowchart showing a procedure for determining an optimized measurement condition for each mark;

FIG. 6A shows an alignment mark image and a process window;

FIG. 6B shows a one-dimensional digital signal sequence, to which a two-dimensional image signal is converted, obtained by setting the alignment mark image and the process window;

FIG. 7A shows an image signal with high contrast;

FIG. 7B shows an image signal with low contrast;

FIG. 8 shows a conceptual view seen from one angle of a production system for semiconductor devices using an apparatus according to the present invention;

FIG. 9 shows a conceptional view seen from another angle of a production system for semiconductor devices using an apparatus according to the present invention;

FIG. 10 shows a specific example fo a user interface;

FIG. 11 shows a process flow for manufacturing devices; and

FIG. 12 illustrates a wafer process.

Other objects and advantages besides those discussed above shall be apparent to those skilled in the art from the description of a preferred embodiment of the invention which follows. In the description, reference is made to the accompanying drawings, which form a part thereof, and which illustrate an example of the invention. Such an example, however, is not exhaustive of the various embodiments of the invention, and, therefore, reference is made to the claims which follow the description for determining the scope of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

An alignment method according to an embodiment of the present invention switches measurement conditions or measurement parts in measuring alignment marks formed in each layer.

In the past, in exposure apparatuses, as a measurement mechanism for alignment marks to obtain information about position in a wafer surface, there are known an Off-Axis mechanism wherein non-exposure light is used and does not pass any projection lens, and a non-exposure TTL (Through The Lens) mechanism wherein non-exposure light is used and passes a projection lens.

Particularly, multiple wavelengths are recently used as illumination light for observation in order to improve detection accuracy for AA mark observation images. For example, the use of a light source with a relatively wide wavelength width by a halogen lamp (633 ± 30 nm, for example) as illumination light for observing non-exposure light is characterized in that an interference fringe by a resist film, which tends to occur when observing an AA mark on a wafer by using a monochromatic light source such as a He-Ne laser, can be reduced, thereby providing better alignment.

There is also a method to improve the interference conditions by varying the center wavelength of illumination light.

It is also possible to vary illumination conditions for a He-Ne laser, for example, conditions for a value representing a light intensity distribution of illumination (σ = standard deviation).

Thus, in order to support processes that vary for each layer, each alignment mark is measured by switching conditions of illumination light optimized for alignment marks in each layer when measuring alignment marks in each layer.

Various embodiments will be now described with reference to the drawings.

[First Embodiment]

FIG. 1 shows an exposure apparatus comprising an alignment device including a non-exposure TTL mechanism and an Off-Axis mechanism, according to a first embodiment of the present invention.

As shown in FIG. 1, light from a light source emitted by illumination system 1 irradiates a reticle 2 as a first object. Patterns on a surface of the reticle 2 are projection-transferred onto wafer 4 as a second object by a projection optical system 3. The wafer 4 is fixed onto a movable stage 5 disposed on a base plate 10. The reticle 2 is held on a reticle stage 2a, and the reticle stage 2a is moved in X, Y, Z, and θ directions by means of a reticle drive mechanism (not shown).

On the wafer 4, a plurality of alignment marks 4a and 4b have been formed in existing layers until the last process step, which marks are located in a certain positional relationship with respect to circuit patterns. Reference numeral 6 denotes a microscope with a TTL mechanism as a first measurement condition or measurement part. The TTL microscope 6 is a microscope that reads the alignment mark 4a on the wafer 4 through lenses of the projection optical system 3, and performs position measurement for the alignment mark 4a on the wafer 4 by a mirror 6d located between the reticle 2 and the projection optical system 3. Reference numeral 6a denotes an illumination light source with a He-Ne laser, and reference numeral 6b

is a CCD camera. The illumination light emitted by the illumination light source 6a is transmitted by an alignment optical system 6c and mirror 6d disposed between the reticle 2 and projection optical system 3, through lenses in the projection optical system 3, thereby illumination alignment mark regions on the wafer 4.

Light reflected or scattered on the wafer 4 based on the alignment mark 4a is transmitted again through the lenses in the projection optical system 3, by the mirror 6d and alignment optical system 6c, and then is imaged on the CCD camera 6b.

The CCD camera 6b processes the image of the alignment mark 4a to obtain position information on the wafer 4.

Reference numeral 7 denotes an Off-Axis microscope as a second measurement condition or measurement part, which microscope has two measurement methods. It is placed at a position other than the TTL type microscope 6 and measures an alignment mark 4b formed at a position in a certain positional relationship with respect to an exposed position. Reference numeral 7a denotes a first illumination light source with a He-Ne laser used in a first measurement method, and reference numeral 7b denotes an illumination light source with a halogen lamp used in a second measurement method, and reference numeral 7c denotes a CCD camera. One of these two light sources 7a and 7b used in the first and second measurement methods is selected as a light source, and illumination light from the light source illuminates an alignment mark region on the wafer 4 through an alignment optical system 7d without passing through the projection optical system 3.

The light reflected or scattered on the surface of the wafer 4 is again imaged through the alignment optical system 7d on the CCD camera 7c. The position information is measured by image-processing with the CCD camera 7c.

FIGS. 2A and 2B show examples of arrangements of alignment marks of this embodiment. FIG. 2A shows an in-shot plan arrangement, and FIG. 2B shows a step formation of the alignment marks. Reference numerals 11 and 13 denote alignment marks formed in layer A, and reference numerals 12 and 14 denote alignment marks formed in layer B.

FIG. 3 shows an example of an arrangement for measurement shots S1 to S8 in global alignment, and FIG. 4 shows a measurement/exposure sequence in the example. After selecting a reticle set at step 31, a wafer set at step 32, and a halogen lamp as the light source at step 33, at first using the Off-Axis microscope 7, while halogen lamp 7b with a wide wavelength band is being set as the light source, alignment mark 11 formed in layer A shown in FIGS. 2A and 2B is measured at step 34, and alignment mark 13 formed in layer A shown in FIGS. 2A and 2B is measured at step 35. Next, after selecting He-Ne laser light as the light source at step 36, while the He-Ne laser light 7a is being set as the light source, the alignment mark 12 formed in layer B is measured at step 37 and the alignment mark 14 is measured at step 38.

A determination is made of all sample shots having been measured at step 39, so that the measurements described above are repeated until measurement of all sample shots is completed. Upon completion of measurement of all sample shots, deviations of the reticle with respect to layer A is calculated from measurements of the mark 11 and mark 13 at step

40, and deviations of the reticle with respect to layer B is calculated from measurements of the mark 12 and the mark 14 at step 41. After statistically processing the amount of the deviations at step 42, and correction-driving the reticle stage at step 43, exposure is performed at step 44, and the wafer is unloaded at step 45, and a determination is made if the process is completed for the whole wafer at step 46, and if the process is not completed for the whole wafer, then the processes described above are repeated starting with the wafer setting at step 32.

For example, measurement conditions or measurement parts are predetermined such that for each mark, switching of light sources such as a He-Ne laser and a halogen lamp, as the measurement conditions or measurement parts, provides respective waveforms of the marks detected by the CCD camera with good contrast, and a manual switching part is provided such that the measurement conditions or measurement parts can be set in the apparatus side.

[Second Embodiment]

In a second embodiment of the present invention, a TTL mechanism and an Off-Axis mechanism can be switched as measurement conditions or measurement parts, and a wavelength filter for varying the center wavelength of a halogen lamp may be formed as a measurement method.

It is also possible to switch values representing a light intensity distribution condition of illumination by He-Ne laser light (σ = standard deviation, not shown) and to change them.

As in the first embodiment, measurement conditions or measurement parts are predetermined such that for each mark, switching of the TTL mechanism and Off-Axis

mechanism, switching of center wavelengths of the halogen lamp, or switching of σ s, as the measurement conditions or measurement parts, provides waveforms for the marks with good contrast, and a manual switching part is provided such that the measurement conditions or measurement parts can be set in the apparatus side. It is also possible to automatically calculate the contrast and determine for each mark an optimized measurement condition or measurement part, or a wavelength and σ .

In measurement of a wafer position, it is needed to set an optimized illumination condition since reflection, absorption, scattering, diffraction and interference of the illumination light affect the measurement of the wafer position depending on the physical features of the alignment marks and manufacturing process such as application condition of a resist.

[Third Embodiment]

In a third embodiment of the present invention, it is possible to automatically switch measurement conditions for each of the marks formed in the wafer right after starting each lot processing and to automatically calculate contrast to determine an optimized measurement condition or measurement part for each mark.

As shown in FIG. 6A, the mark is composed of four rectangular portions having the same geometry. As described for the first embodiment, light flux reflected by the alignment mark transmits the lenses of the projection optical system 3 through the alignment optical system, and then forms an alignment mark image WM on the CCD camera.

It is subjected to photo-electric conversion in the CCD camera, then converted to a two-dimensional digital sequence in an A/D conversion device (not shown). Then, a process

window W_p is set for the digital signal conversion, as shown in FIGS. 6A and 6B, and the two-dimensional image signal is converted to a one-dimensional digital signal sequence $S(x)$ by an addition process in the y-direction.

The contrast is changed for each mark, as shown in FIGS. 7A and 7B, by switching the alignment measurement conditions, for example, by switching light sources such as a halogen lamp or He-Ne laser, or by switching light intensity distribution conditions σ for He-Ne laser light. FIG. 7A shows an image signal with high contrast while FIG. 7B shows an image signal with low contrast.

FIG. 5 is a flowchart showing a process procedure for determining an optimized measurement condition for each mark.

As shown in FIG. 5, a halogen lamp is selected as the light source at step 502, and measurement of an alignment mark is performed with the Off-Axis microscope 7 at step 503, and a contrast value is calculated at step 504.

The measurement and contrast calculation are repeated for the alignment marks 11 to 14 at step 505.

Next, the center wavelength of the halogen lamp is varied at step 506, and then a similar measurement of the alignment marks are performed at step 507. A similar contrast calculation is performed at step 508. The measurement and contrast calculation are repeated for the alignment marks 11 to 14 at step 509.

Steps 510 to 513 are process steps in the case where He-Ne laser light is selected as the alignment light source. After the He-Ne laser is selected at step 510, a similar procedure is performed by steps 511 to 513, as performed by steps 503 to 505 described above.

Steps 514 to 517 are process steps in the case where a light intensity distribution σ of the He-Ne laser light is varied. After the light intensity distribution σ is varied at step 514, a similar procedure is performed by steps 515 to 517, as performed by steps 503 to 505 described above.

At step 517, an optimized measurement condition is determined for each mark from contrast values for varied measurement conditions. The determined measurement condition is held in the lot, and global alignment is conducted with the determined conditions, for each wafer.

The measurement may be automatically performed for each lot with the determined measurement conditions, or the measurement condition may be held as recipe conditions for each lot. In the case of starting the same lot, the time for the automatic measurement is reduced by referring to the held measurement conditions.

(Embodiment for a semiconductor production system)

An example of a production system for semiconductor devices (e.g., semiconductor chips such as ICs and LSIs, liquid crystal panels, CCDs, thin film magnetic heads, micro-machines, etc.) by an apparatus according to the present invention will be described. In the system, maintenance services such as trouble management or regular maintenance, or provision of software for manufacturing apparatuses installed in semiconductor manufacturing factories are provided by using a computer network outside the manufacturing factories.

FIG. 8 is a representation picked up with a certain angle from the whole system. In the figure, reference numeral 101 denotes an office of a vendor (e.g., an apparatus

supplier/manufacture) providing manufacturing apparatuses for manufacturing semiconductor devices. It is assumed that the example of manufacturing apparatuses includes semiconductor manufacturing apparatuses for performing various processes used in a semiconductor manufacturing factory, for example, apparatuses for pre-process (e.g., lithography apparatuses such as exposure apparatuses, resist process apparatuses, and etching apparatuses, heat treatment apparatuses, film deposition apparatuses, planarization apparatuses, etc.), and apparatuses for post-process (e.g., assembly apparatuses, inspection apparatuses, etc.). The office 101 comprises a host management system 108 for providing a maintenance database for manufacturing apparatuses, a plurality of operation terminal computers 110, and a local area network (LAN) 109 to construct an intranet or the like. The host management system 108 comprises a gateway for connecting the LAN 109 to Internet 105 (external network of the office) and a security function to limit access from the outside.

Reference numerals 102 to 104 denote manufacturing factories of semiconductor manufacturers as users of the manufacturing apparatuses. The manufacturing factories 102 to 104 may be factories belonging to different manufacturers, or may also be factories belonging to a single manufacturer (for example, a factory for pre-process and a factory for post-process). Each of the factories 102 to 103 comprises a plurality of manufacturing apparatuses 106, a local area network (LAN) 111 for connecting them to construct an intranet or the like, and a host management system 107 as a monitor apparatus for monitoring operation status of each manufacturing apparatus 106. The host management system 107 provided in each of the factories 102 to 104 comprises a gateway for connecting LAN 111 in each factory to Internet 105 (external network of the factories). This allows access from the LAN 111 via Internet

105 to the host management system 108 in the vendor 101's side, and the security function in the host management system 108 allows only a predefined user to access it. Specifically, notification from the factory to the vendor, of status information representing operation status of each manufacturing apparatus 106 (for example, symptoms of the manufacturing apparatus with trouble occurrence), as well as reception from the vendor of response information responding to the notification (for example, information indicating management methods for trouble, software and data for the management for the trouble) and maintenance information such as up-to-date software and help information, are possible. For data communication between each of factories 102 to 104 and vendor 101, data communication over LAN 111 in each factory, a communication protocol (TCP/IP) commonly used in the Internet is employed. Instead of utilizing the Internet as an external network outside the factory, a dedicated line network (such as an ISDN), which tightens security to avoid access by a third party, may also be utilized. The host management system is not limited to the one provided by the vendor. The user may also construct a database and place it on an external network, and to allow access from a plurality of factories of the user to the database.

FIG. 9 shows a concept representation picked up with a different angle than FIG. 8 from the whole system of this embodiment. In the example described above, the plurality of user factories each having manufacturing apparatuses and the management system of the vendor of the manufacturing apparatuses are connected to each other via the external network, and information about production control of each factory and at least one manufacturing apparatus is data-communicated via the external network. On the other hand, in this example, a factory comprising apparatuses from a plurality of vendors and a

management system of the vendor of each of the plurality of manufacturing apparatuses are connected to each other via an external network outside the factory, and maintenance information for each manufacturing apparatus is data-communicated. In the figure, reference numeral 201 denotes a manufacturing factory of a user of manufacturing apparatuses (e.g., a semiconductor device manufacturer), a manufacturing line of which is provided with manufacturing apparatuses for performing various processes, for example, here, exposure apparatuses 202, resist process apparatuses 203, and a film deposition process apparatus 204. While FIG. 9 shows only one manufacturing factory 201, actually, multiple factories are connected by a network as well. Each apparatus in the factory is connected to the others via LAN 206 to constitute an intranet, and operation management of the manufacturing line is conducted by a host management system 205.

On the other hand, offices of vendors (e.g., apparatus supplier/manufacturers) such as an exposure apparatus manufacturer 210, a resist process apparatus manufacturer 220, and a film deposition apparatus manufacturer 230, have host management systems 211, 221, and 231, respectively, for conducting remote maintenance for the apparatuses supplied by respective manufacturers, and the host management systems comprise a respective maintenance database and a gateway to an external network, as described above. The host management system 205 for managing each apparatus in the user's manufacturing factory is connected via the Internet or a dedicated line network (external network 200) to management systems of a vendor of apparatuses 211, 221, and 231, respectively. In this system, although upon trouble occurrence in any of the group of apparatuses in the manufacturing line, the operation of the manufacturing line stops, a quick measure can be implemented by receiving

remote maintenance via the Internet 200 from the vendor of the apparatus with the trouble occurrence, thereby minimizing the stoppage of the manufacturing line.

Each of the manufacturing apparatuses installed in the semiconductor manufacturing factory has a display, a network interface, and a computer for executing network access software and apparatus operation software stored in a storage device. The storage device is such as a built-in memory, hard-disc, or network file server. The above-described network access software includes web browsers for dedicated or general purposes, and provides on its display a user interface with a picture such as one illustrated in FIG. 10, for example. An operator who manages the manufacturing apparatuses in each factory, referring to the picture, inputs information such as machine-type of apparatus 401, serial number 402, title of trouble 403, day of occurrence 404, degree of emergency 405, symptom 406, measure 407, history 408, and so on, into input items on the picture. The input information is transmitted via the Internet to the maintenance database, then suitable maintenance information of the result is sent back from the maintenance database to be presented on the display. The user interface provided by the web browser also implements hyperlink functions 410 to 412, as shown in the figure, thereby allowing the operator to access more detailed information on each item, to retrieve up-to-date version software to be used for the manufacturing apparatus from a software library provided by the vendor, or to retrieve an operation guide (help information), which is provided for factory operators to refer to. Here, the maintenance information provided by the maintenance database also includes information related to the present invention described above, that is to say, information about suitable measurement conditions for each preformed layer and information about the measurement parts or measurement

conditions, and the above-described software library also provides up-to-date software for implementing the present invention.

A manufacturing process for manufacturing semiconductor devices utilizing the production system mentioned above will be described. FIG. 11 shows the overall flow of a manufacturing process for the semiconductor devices. Circuit design for a semiconductor device is conducted at step 1 (circuit design). Masks with the designed circuit pattern formed thereon are fabricated at step 2 (mask fabrication). On the other hand, wafers are prepared with a material such as silicon at step 3 (wafer preparation). Step 4 (wafer process) is referred to as a pre-process, and actual circuits are formed on the wafers by lithography techniques with the prepared masks described above and the wafers. The next step, step 5 (assembly), is referred to as a post-process, which is a process to form semiconductor chips by using the wafers fabricated by step 4, and includes processes for assembly such as assembly processes (dicing, bonding), and a packaging process (chip encapsulation). At step 6 (inspection), inspections such as a performance verification test or a durability test for the semiconductor devices fabricated at step 5 are carried out. The semiconductor devices, through those processes, are completed, and then shipped (step 7). The pre-process and post-process are respectively conducted in respective different dedicated factories, and maintenance is performed for each factory by the remote maintenance system described above. Information for production control or apparatus maintenance is also data communicated through the Internet or a dedicated line network between the pre-process factory and the post-process factory.

FIG. 12 shows a detailed flow of the above-described wafer process. At step 11 (oxidation), a surface of a wafer is oxidized. At step 12 (CVD), an insulator film is deposited on the wafer surface. At step 13 (electrode formation), electrodes are formed on the wafer surface by evaporation. At step 14 (ion implantation), ions are implanted into the wafer. At step 15 (resist process), a photosensitive agent is applied onto the wafer. At step 16 (exposure), the wafer is printed-exposed with the circuit pattern on the mask by the above-described exposure apparatus. At step 17 (development), the exposed wafer is developed. At step 18 (etching), portions other than the developed resist pattern are etched off. At step 19 (resist strip), a resist after etching, which is no longer necessary, is removed. Multiple circuit patterns are formed on the wafer by repeating those steps. Since the manufacturing apparatuses used for each process are maintained by the above-described remote maintenance system, trouble can be prevented beforehand, and when trouble occurs, performance can quickly be recovered, thereby improving productivity for semiconductor devices as compared with conventional ways.

The present invention is not limited to the above embodiments and various changes and modifications can be made within the spirit and scope of the present invention. Therefore, to apprise the public of the scope of the present invention the following claims are made.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1-17. (Cancelled)

18. (New) An exposure method of exposing a substrate to a pattern, in which a mark in each of a plurality of layers on the substrate is detected for alignment of the substrate, said method comprising steps of:

illuminating a mark in each of a plurality of layers on a substrate;

detecting an image of the illuminated mark in each of the plurality of layers;

and

setting an illumination condition in said illuminating step for the mark in each of the plurality of layers.

19. (New) A method according to claim 18, wherein the illumination condition includes at least one of a kind of a detection system which illuminates a mark and detects an image of the illuminated mark, a kind of a light source, a wavelength of light and an intensity distribution of light.

20. (New) A method according to claim 18, wherein, in said setting step, the illumination condition is set based on a manual indication.

21. (New) A method according to claim 20, wherein the manual indication is performed through a manual switching part.

22. (New) A method according to claim 18, wherein, in said setting step, the illumination condition is set with respect to each of the plurality of layers.

23. (New) A method according to claim 18, wherein the illumination condition is set based on the detected image.

24. (New) A method according to claim 23, wherein the image of the illuminated mark in each of the plurality of layers is detected in each of a plurality of illumination conditions, and the illumination condition is set for the mark in each of the plurality of layers based on the detected images.

25. (New) A method according to claim 24, wherein the illumination condition is set for the mark in each of the plurality of layers based on a contrast of each of the detected images.

26. (New) A method according to claim 24, wherein the setting is performed for each lot of the substrate.

27. (New) A method according to claim 18, wherein said illuminating step includes steps of:

illuminating each first mark in a first layer in a first illumination condition;

and

illuminating each second mark in a second layer in a second illumination condition.

28. (New) A method according to claim 27, further comprising:

a step of calculating a position of each region on the substrate based on each detected image for the illuminated first mark and each detected image for the illuminated second mark.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An exposure method of exposing a substrate to a pattern in which a mark in each of a plurality of layers on the substrate is detected for alignment of the substrate. The method includes illuminating a mark in each of a plurality of layers on a substrate, detecting an image of the illuminated mark in each of the plurality of layers, and setting an illumination condition in the illuminating step for the mark in each of the plurality of layers.